(ii) Instructions have been issued to keep the Fair Price Shops open everyday, indicating the working hours on the Notice Board of the FPSs;

(iii) Instructions have been issued to allow BPL families to take their monthly entitlements on weekly basis;

(iv) The PDS (Control) Order, 2001 of the Government of India is being implemented;

(v) Instructions have been issued for the FCI authorities and the Civil Supplies staff to jointly inspect the stocks, before lifting of foodgrains from the FCI depots, so that only FAQ stocks are issued to the consumers under the PDS;

(vi) Steps have been taken to involve the Panchayati Raj Institutions/ Self-help Groups/NGOs; Vigilance Committees have been constituted at the FPS/Block/District levels to monitor the functioning of the Fair Price Shops;

(vii) Wide publicity has been arranged in respect of the entitlements of Consumers and Monthly Allotments of foodgrains for the information of the general public and of the peoples' representatives.

Visit of U.S. Joint Chief of Staff Committee to India

*411. SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA:
SHRI KALRAJ MISHRA:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chief of Staff Committee General Richard B. Myers visited India in the last week of July, 2003;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the purpose of his visit;

(c) whether the General brought any special message from the U.S. President with regard to the stand taken by the Government of India about sending troops to Iraq; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) Yes Sir.

(b) Chairman of the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff General Richard B. Myers visited New Delhi on 28-29 July 2003 in the context of regular senior level defence engagement between India and the United States to strengthen mutually beneficial bilateral defence relations.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) does not arise.

Surrender of telephones

*412. DR. PRABHA THAKUR:
PROF. ALKA BALRAM KSHATRIYA:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether a large number of customers have surrendered their telephone connections under Khar Telephone Exchange of MTNL in Mumbai;

(b) if so, how many telephone connections have been surrendered during the last six months;

(c) whether MTNL continues to send monthly rental bills even after surrender of telephone connections and have not returned their security deposits; and

(d) if so, the reasons therefor and by when MTNL would refund the security deposits for the surrendered telephones?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI ARUN SHOURIE): (a) and (b) Sir, 825 telephones were surrendered from Khar exchange during the last six months *i.e.* 1.1.2003 to 30.6.2003.

(c) A customers needs to be billed for the services rendered till the date of surrender of phone and this is done in the subsequent billing cycle. Therefore, the customers will receive one bill after the termination of the connection covering calls that may have been made before the date of surrender.

(d) Normally, security deposit is refunded within 4—6 weeks. A few cases get delayed on account of non-completion of formalities by the